

The Builder.

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NE more blow, "for St. George and merry England," if it be only to prevent, if possible, our foreign friends from being merry at the expense of England.

Public opinion against the proposed site for the colossal Wellington grows stronger every day. Since the question came clearly before the public, we have purposely taken the opinion of some hundreds of persons of all classes, chiefly when passing the spot, and assert unhesitatingly, that we have never met one person prepared to defend the intention of the committee, or disposed to believe that the result will be any thing but unsatisfactory. There is not one journal, so far as we know, that advocates, or even excuses it; the architect of the arch first trembles, and then denounces it; the last government opposed it, ("the opinion of every eminent architect, artist, or other competent authority, who had been consulted on the subject, being so decidedly against it"); the present government offered another site, and would gladly defray all the expenses incurred to facilitate the alteration; and the artist, Mr. Wyatt, as we have good reason to believe, would prefer to have it placed somewhere nearer to the ground. And yet, despite this universal objection, the committee, or rather the two or three gentlemen who represent the committee, persist in their determination, and succeed by means inexplicable and in defiance of a promise, to the House of Commons, that the works should not go on until the opinion of the House had been taken) in obtaining permission to outrage the national taste. We grieve to find Sir Frederick Trench, so right in another case, so wrong in this.

The public have room to blame those on whom they are accustomed to rely for information and guidance in matters of taste, and to regret, that fear of responsibility, and unwillingness to interfere, prevented some whose opinion would have been listened to and ought to have been expressed, from speaking until, perhaps, it is too late.

In 1839, long before *THE BUILDER* was established, we addressed the following remark; and others, under the signature of "Stimulator," to the *Art-Union Journal* :—

"At the close of July, a meeting of the general committee appointed to arrange this memorial was held, and it was then mentioned as a matter settled—but to our exceedingly great surprise—that the statue was to be placed on the arch at Hyde-park Corner. Surely the committee cannot be in earnest, or cannot have given the subject sufficient consideration. We had thought that the monstrous effigy which was erected some months ago in this situation, to the infinite terror of young horses and neighbouring crows, had served fully to convince the committee of its unsuitness. We know very well that this caricature (nailed together in the morning, and painted by Henning in the afternoon of the same day) was not to be taken as a representation of the proposed statue. Apollo forbid that it should be so! Still it was quite sufficient to prove, even to the capacity which requires so palpable an argument, that a triumphal arch complete in itself, and demanding admiration of itself, is not a proper pedestal for a commemorative figure. It is quite certain either that the statue must be so large, and important as to render

the arch secondary and insignificant, or that the statue will become a mere ornamental accessory, the special purpose of which will speedily be forgotten.

Our excellent contemporary, the *Literary Gazette*, quotes, in approval of the proposed situation, a conversation which took place between Mr. D. Burton, the architect, and Mr. Wyatt, the sculptor, long before the Wellington tribute was suggested; wherein Mr. Burton held that the addition of a figure, or group of figures, was essential to the beauty and finish of his erection. No doubt he thought so—no doubt he thinks so still; but we will venture to say he cannot possibly desire that this figure should be so dominant as to degrade the arch to a mere pedestal, which certainly will be the case if a statue of Wellington, sufficiently large to retain its individuality, be placed thereon."

Our remonstrance, however, awoke no sufficient response,—the evil was distant, and the public mind was occupied.

The model was removed, the sculptor went to work, and the question, so far as the site was concerned, went to sleep. In July, last year, when the arrangements for strengthening the arch were quietly under discussion, we protested in our own columns against the unwise determination,* and it was only then that our contemporaries, simply reiterating our arguments, really entered the arena, and unanimously objected to the proposal.

And where during all this time have been our Academy? where our Institute? where our responsible professors of fine-art in the metropolis?

Not at the eleventh hour, but as twelve is striking, one of the latter has taken courage, and speaks. Speaks well too; says better, all that we have said, and more,—but still shews some fear of imputations by signing himself simply C. R. C.

How much good is postponed because men fear wrong motives may be imputed to them, or shrink from responsibility. This, however, is in a parenthesis. C. R. C., in a letter to *The Times* (published on Tuesday last), begs leave to add "one more voice to the outcry already so justly raised against the erection of the statue of the Duke of Wellington over the arch at Hyde-park Corner," saying:—"Indeed, as one of the responsible professors of fine art in the metropolis, I feel myself called upon to offer some arguments against this solecism in art, so seriously involving the honour of the country, remembering always that 'England expects every man to do his duty,' no less in every civil than in every military capacity."

We would that this duty had been felt long ago. Still we are thankful for the compliance with it even now, and although the insertion of the whole of the communication would trench too much into our space, we are led to reprint the greater part of it, as confirmatory of our own remarks from first to last, and to preserve in our pages the protest of at least one of "the responsible professors of fine art in the metropolis,"—the more so too, as it is that of the accomplished professor of architecture in the Royal Academy.

"The solecism," says Professor Cockerell, "consists in the proposition to place a statue of colossal dimensions as an ornament to a triumphal arch of disproportionate magnitude, so that the ornament and the principal are in danger of exchanging places, and the major may become the subordinate to the minor. And again, in proposing to place that ornament on an axis at right angles with that of the arch itself."

In a question of this nature we naturally turn to classical examples, and the various experiments made by the Romans in this kind of

monument; of which the work of Bellori on the triumphal arches of Rome will afford full, explicit, and satisfactory illustrations; he restores the actual remains of them, in all their architectural details, and decorates them with their essential ornaments of quadrigæ, trophies, and equestrian statues, by the aid of contemporary medals—twelve examples of which, from the period of Augustus to that of Trajan, he gives us in his last plate.

In so doing he has been careful to correct the exaggeration in the relative scale of those ornaments, to the architecture of which the medalist, under the conditions of his art, was unavoidably guilty; for had the medalist refrained from this license in the minute dimensions of his work, the nature and meaning of those ornaments would have been scarcely discernible. We should, therefore, be lamentably misled were we, unaccompanied with this reflection, to draw from these medals an argument in favour of the relative proportion of the sculpture and architecture as proposed at Hyde-park Corner.

It is not, of course, proposed to sacrifice the architecture to the statue; on the contrary, it is presumed by the zealous propounders of this measure to enhance the value of both, by their fitness and correlation. All are ready to admit that the harmonious union of sculpture with architecture, constitutes the great secret of proportion and the glory of a monument; but all are not equally aware, that in adjusting the parts to the whole by the co-operation of these arts, we are to be guided by rules scarcely less delicate, and at the same time determinate, than those which regulate the proportions of the human form divine itself.

Amongst the ancients, certain fixed laws and analogies were absolutely established on this subject, and may be plainly traced in their best works: one of the most obvious of which was, that the dignity of the architecture was never to be impaired by the sculpture, or overlaid by the nature or dimensions of the figure; to this end, the bulk of the latter was never to exceed the diameter of the column, nor was the sufficiency either of the supports, the entablature, or the arch, to carry the incumbent weight, ever to be doubted. All soffices and underparts, usually concealed by nature, were carefully to be avoided; the *statua in situ*, often so destructive of contour and form, as seen in their natural positions (of the horse especially), were to be used with peculiar reserve and discretion. A multitude of minor considerations and rules of art, too long to cite in this place, regulated these operations at all times; and we to those who respect them not, and who dispute the conscientious convictions of experimenters, repeated with so much uniformity, through so many successive ages and fashions of opinion."

The professor then goes on to shew that when the colossal was employed by the ancients, the magnitude was rendered unquestionable by position and arrangement; whereas in the present case although manifestly disproportioned to the arch, the size of the figure at such an elevation will be unappreciated, from the absence of fitting objects of comparison.

If the committee had condescended to seek the advice of professional men, he says, they would have been spared disgrace, and the public trouble.

The professor continues:—

"If any thing could have shaken their insatiation, the model put up experimentally in 1836 would have done so; but with determined blindness they shut their eyes to the conviction it brought on all discriminating beholder; the preposterous impression made by that model, 21 feet high, can never be forgotten by any one who sustained the shock of the spectacle. What then, Sir, will it be when the colossal itself will be found to be 30 feet high?"

Further, this model had no bulk, consisting simply of flat boards:

"But if the authority of the medals as respects the relative scale of the figures to the architecture is to be distrusted for the reason assigned, much more is that for the placing the statue at right angles with the axis of the arch: or, in other words, in contrasting the profile view of a statue with the front view of

* Lord Canning's remonstrance to Duke of Rutland.

* See Vol. III., p. 236, and pp. 341, 345, 361, &c., in present volume.